

ramp, wherein said energy storage means operates independently of said motor to reduce the force needed to raise or lower said ramp.

8. [The minivan as set forth in claim 7] A minivan adapted for wheelchair access by a ramp attached to the minivan, said minivan comprising:

an electric motor mechanically coupled to the ramp for raising and lowering the ramp; and

energy storage means mechanically coupled to the ramp for reducing the force needed to raise or lower the ramp;

wherein said motor is coupled to said ramp by a gear driven lever arm and said energy storage means includes a spring coupled to said ramp by a cam attached to said lever arm and a plunger connecting said spring to said cam[.],

wherein said spring applies a lifting force to said lever arm to [aid in] oppose the force of gravity while raising or lowering said ramp.

Cancel claim 9.

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

The allowance of claims 1-6 is noted with appreciation.

Claim 7 was rejected as anticipated by the Rice patent. As can be seen from FIG. 7 of the Rice patent, spring 24^a cannot reduce the force needed to raise or lower the ramp because the spring is attached at both ends to rod 24; i.e. the frame of reference of spring 24^a is the rod, not an external point. As such, for the spring to provide the recited function would be akin to lifting oneself by ones own bootstraps. Further, there is no disclosure of such function in the Rice patent and the Examiner has not